DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 221 998 EC 150 066

AUTHOR Roddy, Eugene A.; Eklund, Judith A.
TITLE A Time to Re-Focus. Maintaining the Philosophy of Placement in the Least Restrictive Environment during Times of Economic Transition.
PUB DATE Mar 82
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the International Conference of the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities (Chicago, IL, March 3-6, 1982).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Ancillary School Services; *Disabilities; Elementary Secondary Education; Federal Legislation; *Mainstreaming; *School Role; *Student Placement
IDENTIFIERS Education for All Handicapped Children Act

ABSTRACT

Public Law 94-142 (the Education for All Handicapped Children Act) states that, to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children are to be educated with children who are not handicapped and that special classes, special schooling, or other removal of handicapped children from the regular educational environment should occur only when the nature or severity of the handicap is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. If schools are to adjust to their handicapped students, they must make a careful analysis of these supplementary aids and services. They must identify the major curricula goals to specify those salient points that are appropriate for the exceptional child. Process deficit research needs to be integrated with the trend to remediate using specific subject matter materials that are naturally found. There is a need to determine, at the time of eligibility determination, the best mode of participation as reflected in the student assessment which should identify strengths in programmatic, participatory terms. Finally, there must be a focus, at the time of eligibility determination, on the exit criterion to be utilized to drop the designation of "handicapped." (Author/SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED221998

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

MAINTAINING THE PHILOSOPHY OF PLACEMENT IN THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT DURING TIMES OF ECONOMIC TRANSITION

*** A TIME TO RE-FOCUS ***

Eugene A. Roddy, Director
Special Education Services
School Administrative Unit 22
Hanover, New Hampshire

Judith A. Eklund, Consultant
Vermont State Dept. of Education
Division of Special Education
Montpelier, Vermont

Paper presented at the International Conference ACLD
(Chicago, IL, March 3-6, 1982)

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Eugene A. Roddy
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EC 150066

The topic of mainstreaming and maintaining exceptional children in the least restrictive environment, during these times of economic transition, is a theme that has renewed our thinking regarding instructional environments. This issue has, again, become a timely concern with the mixed messages we have received of late regarding federal support for special education. Unfortunately, as we glibly list answers to our opponents for continued programming options, it has renewed our thinking of the original challenge.

Our complacency with the protections afforded handicapped children by Public Law 94-142 may have coaxed us into a false confidence. Public Law 94-142 was indeed a major legislative victory that aided the efforts of the nation's special education community with a uniform standard by which to organize a service delivery system. This mandate, unfortunately, was excessively focused on process and procedure rather than being a vehicle to aid in community committment to its exceptional citizenry. It was this well-intentioned process of safeguards that our opponents now claim requires "de-regulation"

Now that special education has demonstrated its value, it is time to clarify the original premise for providing an educational experience that is indeed "special". In our zeal to provide alternatives we have, in many ways, separated from the regular education community. It may be time to be proactive to be sure that special education is a part of - not apart from - the general educational effort of the community.

In our quest to provide special educational experiences, we utilized self-contained and isolated instructional grouping patterns to achieve our

goal. The lessons we learned from the Fifties and Sixties showed us that separate does not necessarily ensure "special" education. If the intent of P.L. 94-142 was to guarantee educational opportunities for the exceptional citizenry, then, the authors would submit, we have achieved that goal. Now it is time to refine our specialized intervention so that mild and moderately handicapped children can re-enter that most natural environment for instruction - regular education classrooms.

The professional community recognizes that the term "least restrictive environment" is not synonymous with "mainstreaming". Similarly, the LRE principle should not lead us into believing that "normalcy" will be achieved by any service delivery system or model. Normalcy and success might be defined as assisting exceptional children to the point where they can become meaningful participants and reflect concrete progress while growing with their chronological peers. This premise requires a consistent, purposeful program of student support which has been shown to be effective in our aid to learning-disabled children. The authors are fully cognizant that, due to a multiplicity and/or severity of needs, some learners may need a more structured experience. It is felt, however, that this group is a minority, and this need does not apply to the majority of learning-disabled students in public schools.

The Law states that, to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children are to be educated with children who are not handicapped and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of handicapped children from the regular educational environment should occur only when the nature or severity of the handicap is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (Federal Register, Vol. 42, #163)

The authors cite this passage to refocus our thinking on the last segment

of this excerpt, the importance of "supplementary aids and services."

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) serves as the blueprint for the special education process. But, it may make assumptions that perhaps we have taken for granted, the need to consider a continuum of supplementary aids and services to help maintain an atypical learner in the regular education classroom. Difference and variance in children appears to be no longer acceptable when removal from regular education class to a program of special instruction is easily available and requires less effort from the regular education classroom teacher.

This tendency is even more severe in States that have gone through various tax reduction referenda, be it Proposition X, Y or Z. The increase in general class size, due to reduction in force, has had a dramatic impact on the number of mild or moderately learning-disabled students who are "referred out" due to the increased instructional load upon regular education resources.

It has now, again, become time to re-evaluate and re-emphasize the need for careful, purposeful and coordinated supports to maintain the different learner in view of these new variables.

If schools are to adjust to their students rather than expecting dwindling fiscal resources to serve them in alternate environments, a careful analysis of these supports is in order.

Modifications of content - the need to identify major curricula goals in order to specify those salient points that are appropriate for the exceptional child. The shift away from survival skills to life skills and career skills is required in all areas of academic offerings in our schools. Our brief history in the field of learning disabilities has shown that many of our learning-disabled students go on to post-secondary schools and successful careers. We need to assist regular

education with the filtering process of the commercial text material and the new barrage of instructional technology. The need to organize, in an individualized manner, may be an appropriate goal for special education intervention. This may require the interventions to include, among others, pre-teaching of vocabulary, clarification of salient subject themes, and intra-subject relevance. This process of highlighting is a positive step, not only in communicating to the learner those topics requiring emphasis, but also aiding the instructor in analyzing and outlining relevant and appropriate subject material.

Modification of presentation - there is a renewed need to integrate process deficit research with the trend to remediate using specific subject matter materials that are naturally found, and expected, in the regular education environment. (Mayle & Riegel, 1979) The literature has raised doubts whether isolated teaching will have the desired carryover. The "train and hope" efforts (Stokes & Baer, 1977) have shown that generalization of skills rarely occurs. The traditional approach to generalization has far too long been special program specific.

The goal of making all educational programs individualized and special may not be the lofty goal we once dismissed. The need to re-evaluate teaching procedures and presentation of material has brought us an increase in not only instructional technology, but an increasing store of programmed individualized material (e.g., micro-computers for the classroom and the resulting software). (Beck. 1982)

Perhaps the need to take the genuine "risk" of sharing our special education "tricks of the trade" will work to the genuine advantage of not only inter-collegial communication and co-action but to better and more appropriate instruction for the learner. (Fox, W. et al, 1975)

Modification of participation - the need to determine at the time of eligibility determination, the most positive mode of participation that is reflected after our often exhaustive assessments, which identifies strengths in programmatic, participatory terms. (Lieberman, 1982)

The exodus we now see from the public school in search of private facilties may be a symptom of this oversight. (P.L. 94-142, Section 612 (5) (13)) The need to focus on "appropriate" has taken on a new meaning in view of recent court decisions. (Bales v. Clark, 1982)

The need to identify and articulate the goal of providing special education in isolation is appropriate only if it serves to increase proficiency. Our goal should be to assist the learner to a point where he can participate in some instructionally compatible group in the regular education classroom, rather than having "appropriate" be defined as whatever parent or guardian will agree to.

Modification of evaluation - The need continues that we focus, again at the time of eligibility determination, the exit criterion to be utilized to drop the designation of "handicapped". The concern is that special education for students has handicapped many children without their ever having been disabled. (Lieberman, 1982)

Oft times, we, with best intentions, create dependence that can often be more debilitating than the educational handicap we identify and attempt to ameliorate.

The need to assist children while in the "mainstream" may be to help them and their teachers with the identification of specific targets to aim for rather than the shotgun approach of the past decades. (Heward, 1982)

In sum, the authors are reminded of a tale that best defines our intent:

A long time ago, a king and queen reigned over a modest kingdom that was of moderate resources. They had one possession, however, that was very important to the royal family - a gem. Along the way, their gem suffered damage and was severely scratched. The king and queen were most upset with this occurrance and sought out the many resources available to them to remove the damage. Unfortunately the wizards and magicians in the kingdom were frustrated in their failure to remove the laceration. Sadly, the damage was so severe that the gem's diffusion of light was most distracting. Realizing the reality of their loss, the king and queen were in despair and sought only to comfort each other and minimize the damage and their loss.

A jester, overhearing their cries of sadness, asked the royal family if he might take the jewel for awhile. With the king's permission, the jester left with the stone.

The jester, after much thought and many hours with the jewel, began to make further scratches on the face of the gem. At the top of the original cut, he fashioned the petals of a flower, and midway on the scratch made impressions of leaves and buds. Completing his task, he returned the stone to the family. Their outrage was predictable. "How dare you further scratch our jewel! We wanted the scratch and the damage removed." The jester stood erect, holding the stone in his hands to catch the magic of the light. "Your Highness, you and your wife sought out many specialists and exhausted your limited resources, in hopes of removing the defect. I have humbly changed the jewel so that

> when people view it they will see the image of a flower rather than the ugliness of the defect. I have attempted to change the scar so people will see it as a stem, a source of life, natural beauty and potential. Sadly, Your Highness, the damage will be ever-present. I have only sought to change it in some way so people will see loveliness and beauty, rather than ugliness and damage."

Perhaps it is now time to take a lesson from the jester, and re-articulate the goal of special education. Let us renew our committment and faith in assisting our nation's children, so people see their beauty and potential without making them "pay a tariff" of being removed from the most natural environment for unreasonable amounts of time, in our quest of serving them.

REFERENCES

Federal Register, Vol. 42, #86, Wednesday, May 4, 1977.

Federal Register, Vol. 42, #163, Tuesday, August 23, 1977.

Public Law 94-142, The Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, Section 612 (5) (13), U. S. Office of Education, Washington, D.C.

Bales v. Clark, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Virginia, 1982.

Beck, J. "The Micro-Computer Bandwagon: Is It Playing Your Tune?" The Directive Teacher, V. 4, Winter/Spring, 1982.

Fox, W., Egner, A., Paolucci, P., Perelman, P., & McKenzie, H. "An Introduction to a Regular Classroom Approach to Special Education." In Instructional Alternatives for Exceptional Children, Evelyn Deno, ed. Council for Exceptional Children, 1975.

Heward, W. "What Does the Direct in Directive Teaching Mean? An Interview with Tom Lovitt." The Directive Teacher, Vol. 4, Winter/Spring, 1982.

Lieberman, L. General Session Presentation, International Association for Children with Learning Disabilities: "Learning Disabilities Process or how I was handicapped without ever being disabled?" Chicago, Illinois, March 1982.

Lieberman, L. "Problem Solving: Educational Assessment." Journal of Learning Disabilities, 1982, 3.

Mayle, J. & Riegel, R. Maladies & Remedies: Guidelines for Modification for Mainstreamed Adolescents with Academic Difficulties. Model Resource Room Project, Plymouth, Michigan, 1979.

Redd, W. "Effects of mixed reinforcement contingencies on adult's control of children's behavior." Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 1969, 2.

Rose, T., Lessen, E., and Gottlieb, J. "A Discussion of Transfer of Training in Mainstreaming Progress." Journal of Learning Disabilities, 1982, 3.

Stokes, T., and Baer, D. "An Implicit Technology of Generalization." Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 1977, 10.